



FEMA

Read All About It: Galveston Newspaper Never Misses a Beat

Galveston, TX - The Galveston County Daily News has written countless stories about the challenges and heroes of Hurricane Ike (2008). But there is one story they have refused to write: Their own. During the worst of Ike, they didn't miss an edition.

When the eye of the hurricane passed over the newspaper building at 2 AM on September 13, workers who were there overnight rushed out and boarded up cracked windows in preparation for the second half of the storm. The worst was yet to come: The second half of the storm brought 110-mph winds, rain coming in and around the windows, and a 12-foot surge that flooded the carpet. They lost their roof covering, power, generator, satellite phones, and nearly all their technology.

"We were working around the clock," editor Heber Taylor said. "Our reporters were operating out of emergency management centers in Galveston and League City." Dedicated to their readers and their craft, reporters filed stories using whatever technology they could muster, including cell phones, laptops, and wireless air cards. The News would then export copy editing to the mainland and printed through sister newspapers, starting with the Herald Zeitung in New Braunfels, Texas.

Leigh Jones, one of the News reporters, had to resort to text messaging the news from her cell phone when most communications channels were down. She sent short, 140-character (not words, characters) bulletins, called "tweets," through Twitter, a social networking Web site that works over multiple networks and devices:

5:44 p.m. Sept.12 – People are calling for help now but no one can get to them. The water is really coming up fast now. ...

7:55 a.m. Sept.13 – Crews pulling people from high water. ...

8:30 a.m. Sept.13 – Entire row of houses on fire. Nothing crews can do. ...

8:42 a.m. Sept.13 – Structures from the beach are now on the street. ...

In another city, a reporter who had traveled with evacuees to cover their story was able to get to the Twitter site and convert the bulletins for The News to post online in real time. Soon other media discovered the bulletins and used the Twitter text for regional and national coverage.

When the newspaper was ready for delivery, finding readers proved nearly impossible. Delivery personnel went where they thought people might be, dropping bundles at emergency centers and hotels. "People would see our trucks and flag them down," Taylor said, "and I don't know how many people told me they hiked to the points of delivery just to find out what was happening. Think about it: There was no cable, no CNN, no local news stations. This was the way they got information, and information is critical.



**Galveston County,
Texas**



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Education/Outreach/Public Awareness

Primary Funding:

Private funds